

NUISANCE FLIES IN PLACER COUNTY

Nuisance flies are insects that are annoying or can spread diseases to people and domestic animals by biting or carrying pathogens. The close association of these insects with dead animals, feces, or garbage and their attraction to humans, animals, and our food allows flies to potentially pick up and spread a variety of bacteria and parasites that may cause disease. Others are capable of delivering painful bites and can spread diseases to humans and animals. Some nuisance flies reproduce rapidly and become annoying simply because of their sheer numbers, but are not medically important.

BLACK FLIES

Black flies are small, humpbacked, grayish-black flies that can inflict a painful and irritating bite during daylight hours to both humans and animals. The larvae are typically found attached to objects such as gravel, rocks, or plants in flowing streams.

A common nuisance for humans, adult black flies live less than a month and are not easily interrupted when feeding. Itching and localized swelling and inflammation sometimes occurs at the site of a bite.



BATHROOM FLIES

Bathroom flies, or moth flies, are about 3mm, brownish/gold/gray and hairy with moth-like wings. As a nuisance, they are associated with damp habitats in human bathrooms and kitchens. The adults live for about 20 days, during which they will breed only once. Adults lay their eggs just above the water line inside moist drains, river banks, streams, ponds, tree holes, septic tanks or waste water facilities. They do not bite.



SAND FLIES

Sand flies range from 2-5mm and can be a nuisance to humans. Sand flies breed in humid soil, manure, tree hollows, termite mounds, animal burrows and other dark, moist, organic locations.

Sand fly bites may leave large, red itchy bumps that may turn into a rash. These bumps are frequently several times as itchy as mosquito bites, and tend to last longer as well.

Repellents with high concentrations of DEET or picaridin are proven to be effective, as well as Lemon Eucalyptus oil.



SERVICES

The Placer Mosquito and Vector Control District provides year-round services to the residents of Placer County through our comprehensive Integrated Pest Management program, which includes surveillance, control and public education. District technicians promptly respond to requests for service, conduct on-site inspections and provide information about vectors including but not limited to mosquitoes, ticks, yellowjackets and rats. For inquiries or to request service, please call the District toll free at (888) 768-2343, or visit us online at www.placermosquito.org to join the spray notification list.

FIGHT THE BITE

by practicing the District's **3Ds** of protection:

- 1. DRAIN** any standing water that may produce mosquitoes.
- 2. DEFEND** yourself against mosquitoes by using an effective insect repellent, such as DEET, Picaridin or Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus. Make sure you follow label directions!
- 3. Contact the DISTRICT** for help. We are here to serve you. Call us at (888) 768-2343, or visit us online at www.placermosquito.org.

Your tax dollars hard at work

COVER PHOTOS:

- † Midge Urtica-J. Forman Orth
- †† Crane Fly-Brian Valentine (aka LordV)
- ††† Crane Fly-Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources-Forestry Archive, www.Bugwood.org

INSIDE PHOTOS:

- * Biting Midge-Wilson, Darpel & Mellor (2008)
- ** Non-Biting Midge-D. Cappear, MSU, www.Bugwood.org
- *** Fungus Gnat-Johnny N. Dell, www.Bugwood.org
- **** Crane Fly- © 2008 Dr. Mark S. Brunell

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ABOUT INSECTS THAT RESEMBLE MOSQUITOES IN PLACER COUNTY



Protecting Public Health since 2001



Placer County's rich, diverse landscape from the bright city lights of the valley floor to the rolling foothills to the magnificent snow-capped mountains of the Sierra Nevada, appeals to people from all walks of life. This diverse landscape also provides attractive habitat for a wide variety of mosquitoes and other vectors including ticks and yellowjackets. Be diligent and protect yourself and your family while outdoors and enjoying all that Placer County has to offer.

ABOUT INSECTS THAT RESEMBLE MOSQUITOES

Placer County is home to numerous insects that closely resemble mosquitoes. Many of these insects emerge in large numbers during the early spring, causing the public great alarm. The information in this brochure can help identify these insects that are often mistaken for mosquitoes.

BITING MIDGES

Biting midges or "no-see-ums" or "punkies" are very small, grayish colored flies about the size of an ordinary pinhead.

The larvae are aquatic or semi-aquatic and develop in wet, organic areas such as tree holes, coastal lagoons, estuaries, tidal flats, or other habitats with decaying plant materials.

Adult females feed on blood and produce very painful, stinging burning bites that are red in appearance lasting 2-3 days.

Personal protection is the best defense against biting midges; wear protective clothing such as long sleeves and pants, and apply repellent with DEET to exposed skin when in areas where these insects are present. Window screens will work against some biting midges but not all of them.



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NON-BITING MIDGES

Non-biting midges are small flies that look like mosquitoes. While these insects do not pose a health threat, they can be a serious nuisance, particularly in communities adjacent to large aquatic habitats.

Adult midges are short-lived and weak flyers. During peak emergence, massive swarms of these midges can cover houses, cars, and other structures. Homes and buildings with outside lighting will attract large numbers of non-biting midges.

To discourage the congregation of these insects, move lights away from areas such as doorways, windows, patios, etc.

Replacing mercury vapor lights with yellow or sodium vapor lights will help reduce concentrations of these insects as well. Blacklight traps (bug zappers) will kill midges, but unfortunately often attract more midges into the area than are killed.



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Swarming midges

FUNGUS GNATS

Fungus gnats are common in the fall, spring, and early summer. They have slender legs and segmented antennae that are longer than their head. Fungus gnats are generally 1/16 to 1/8 of an inch long with light grey to clear wings. They are weak fliers and can be found near potted plants or resting on foliage and leaf litter. Female fungus gnats lay their eggs in moist organic material or potting soil. The larvae feed on fungus, preferring leaf litter and decaying vegetation.

Adult fungus gnats can be very abundant at times but do not cause harm to people, plants or animals.



CRANE FLIES

Crane flies are tan in color with long legs and slender bodies reaching 1 to 2 inches in length. The larvae live in moist soil, muddy water or decomposing material.

Adult crane flies are sometimes called "Texas mosquitoes" or "mosquito hawks", but are most commonly known as "mosquito eaters". This is a misnomer because in actuality, crane flies do not eat adult mosquitoes. Some species of crane flies feed on nectar while others do not feed at all.



These non-biting insects do not constitute a health problem but can create an annoyance when found inside homes or in large numbers.